

# The ΖΩ/ΒΑ *Horoi* at Vari in Attica

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A NUMBER of ancient sites have been found over the years in the neighborhood of Vari, an Attic village at the southern end of Mount Hymettos. One site that has recently attracted attention is the hill of Lathouresa just west of the town (*Figure 1*). A fortification at its top (elevation 132.5 m.) and a group of structures on a lower spur have been re-examined.<sup>1</sup> The studies of these sites are concerned with specific remains, so they do not mention a later rupestral inscription at the peak. Known for some time, the inscription deserves notice, especially since two more inscriptions belonging to the same series may be added.

The first inscription to be discovered (**2**) was found and briefly noted by C. W. J. Eliot.<sup>2</sup> It is a three-line boundary marker cut into the rock at the very peak (*PLATE 1a; Figures 2–3*). The lines are oriented 130 degrees west of north and read from south to north. In 1975 two similar *horoi* were found on the same hill.<sup>3</sup> **1** (*PLATE 1b*) is cut into level rock 200 meters distant from **2**, near the edge of the cliff line that stretches down northeast from the top. Its lines lack but ten degrees of running due north-south, reading from south to north. **3** (*PLATE 2a*) is on slanting rock at the end of the southwest spur of the hill, 240 meters from **2**. Its orientation is similar to that of **2**.

The inscriptions are almost identical in every way. The letters, roughly but carefully formed, vary in height from 7 cm. (*zeta*) to 14 cm. (*beta, omicron, rho*). The second line of each inscription reads  $\delta\rho\omicron(s)$ . Flanking this line above and below are the abbreviations ΖΩ and ΒΑ. In **3** they are reduced to Ζ and Β, with the *zeta* slanted and the *beta* turned sideways. These minor differences do not mean that **3** was cut by another hand, only that the cutter worked differently on the sloping surface of rock here as compared with the flat surfaces used for **1** and **2**. Their overall similarity allows the conclusion that they

<sup>1</sup> The fortification: H. Lauter-Bufe, "Das 'Wehrdorf' Lathouresa bei Vari," *AthMitt* 94 (1979) 161–92; the spur site: H. Lauter, *Lathouresa, Beiträge zur Architektur und Siedlungsgeschichte in spätgeometrischer Zeit* (Mainz 1985).

<sup>2</sup> *Coastal Demes of Attika* (=Phoenix Suppl. 5 [1962]) 41f.

<sup>3</sup> The inscriptions were found by Eugene Vanderpool and L. V. Watrous, to whom I extend thanks for permission to publish them.

were cut contemporaneously by one person. 2, at the peak, the most prominent point on the line to be marked, could have been inscribed first; it presents the neatest appearance. Next came 1, where the cutter made his task slightly easier by gouging out a squared instead of a curved *omega*. Finally 3 was cut, and here the cutter simplified his job further still by dropping a letter in each of the abbreviations.

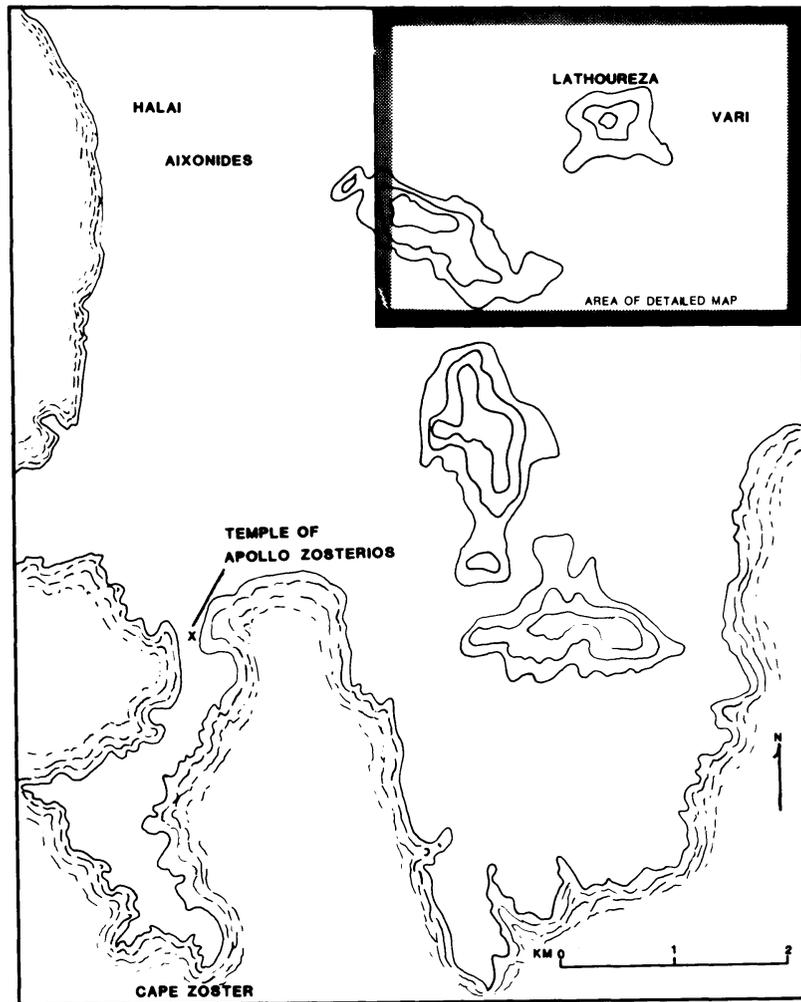


Figure 1. Map of Vari-Zoster Area

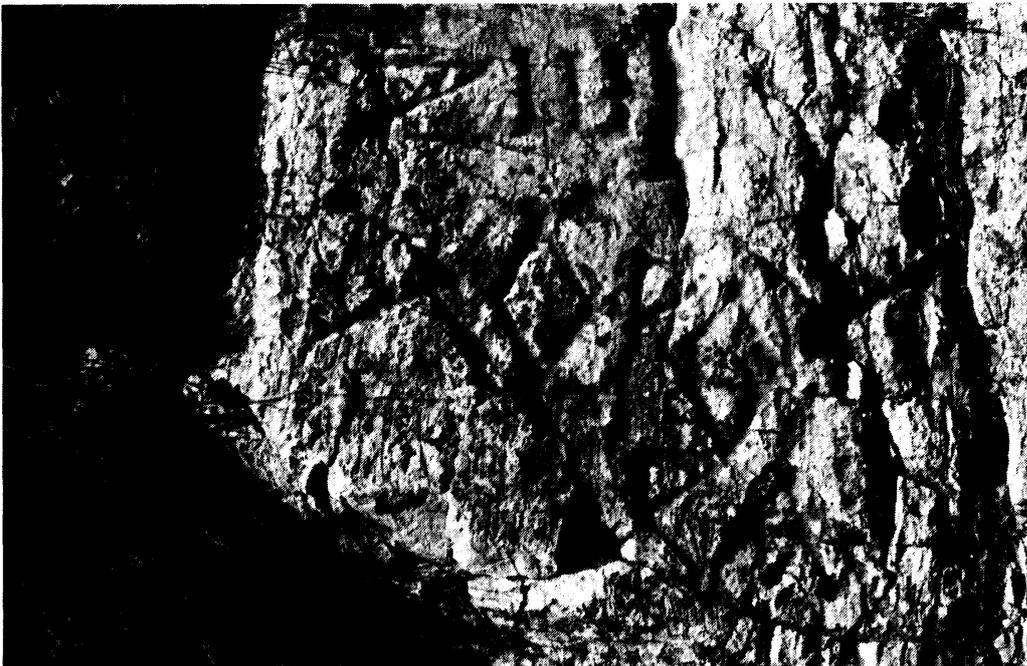
Opposing wedge-shaped markers, apices pointed inward, flank either end of line 2 in the three inscriptions. I take them to be rough indicators of the boundary line,<sup>4</sup> even though their orientation is not all

<sup>4</sup> I know of nothing quite like them in other Greek inscriptions. The *diple*, used in place of *sigma*, to note abbreviations and to separate words, consists of the same

LANGDON PLATE 2

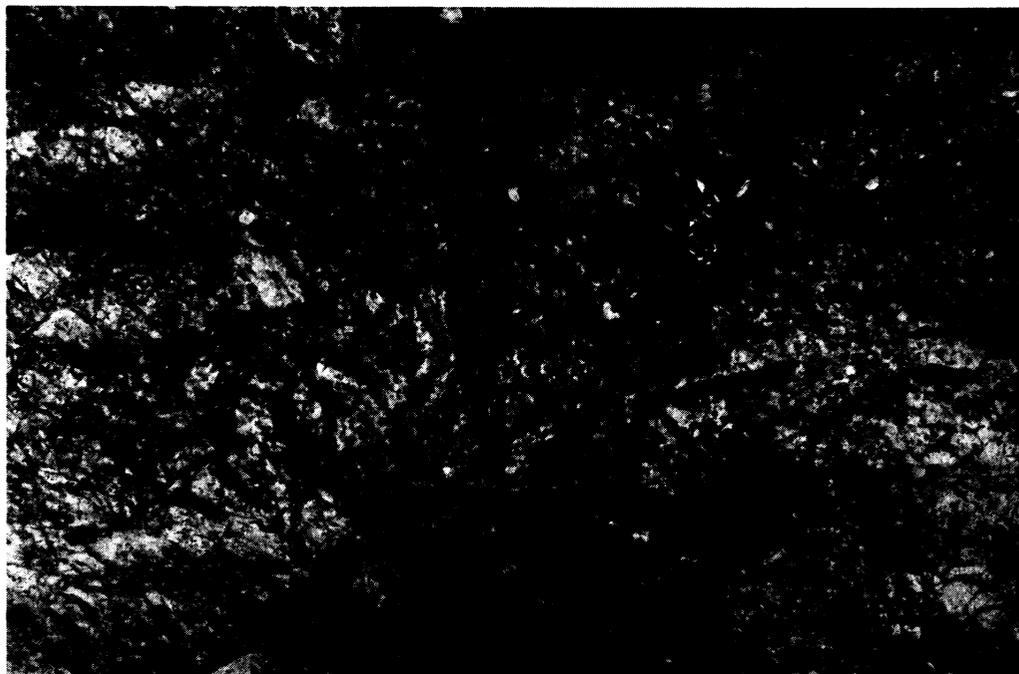


(a) *VARI HOROS 2*



(b) *HOROS 1*

LANGDON PLATE 3

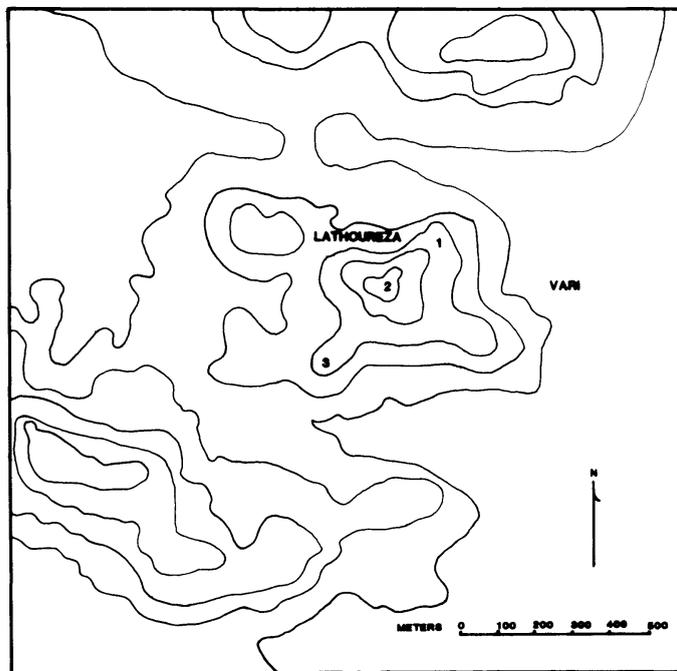


(a) *Horos 3*



(b) SOUTHWEST SPUR OF LATHOUREZA

the same. The inscriptions are placed fairly evenly along the same northeast-southwest line created by the configuration of the hill (*Fig. 2*), so that a person standing at one of them and using the markers to sight an imaginary line would obtain a reasonably good idea of the direction of the boundary. PLATE 2b, a photograph of the southwest spur taken from the slope above, shows how in this section the ridge forms a clearly defined line. 3 is at the far end of the ridge. In the strip of flat ground visible beyond the spur there is no trace of anything marking a boundary. If it were marked beyond Lathoureza, freestanding stelae would likely have been used.



*Figure 2.* Map of Lathoureza

The distinctive lettering of the three *horoi* allows them to be dated fairly narrowly, in contrast to most rupestral inscriptions. The angular style of the normally curved letters is most prominent in Hadrianic and Antonine times. Squared *omega* occurs sporadically before and after, but angular *beta*, *omicron*, and *rho* appear to be confined to the period A.D. 120–210.<sup>5</sup> *Omicron* of diamond shape is the most interest-

marks but with apices turned outward: cf. L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions I* (Berlin/New York 1980) 87f. The markers of the Lathoureza *horoi* clearly serve a different function.

<sup>5</sup> The date for Period XVII of Attic letter forms in W. Larfeld's *Handbuch der griechischen Epigraphik II.2* (Leipzig 1902) 490–501.

ing angular letter. It is found in two dated and numerous undated inscriptions. The dated pair is an ephobic roster of A.D. 145/6 (*IG II*<sup>2</sup> 2055) and a prytany catalogue from the Athenian Agora of 188/9.<sup>6</sup> The other inscriptions with diamond-shaped *omicrons* are assigned to the second or third century, based on the kinship of their lettering to the dated ones.<sup>7</sup> There is nothing in content or form to suggest that these assignments are not correct. The same may be said for the *horoi* under consideration here. In the Hadrianic or Antonine period a boundary line on Lathoureza was thrice labeled.

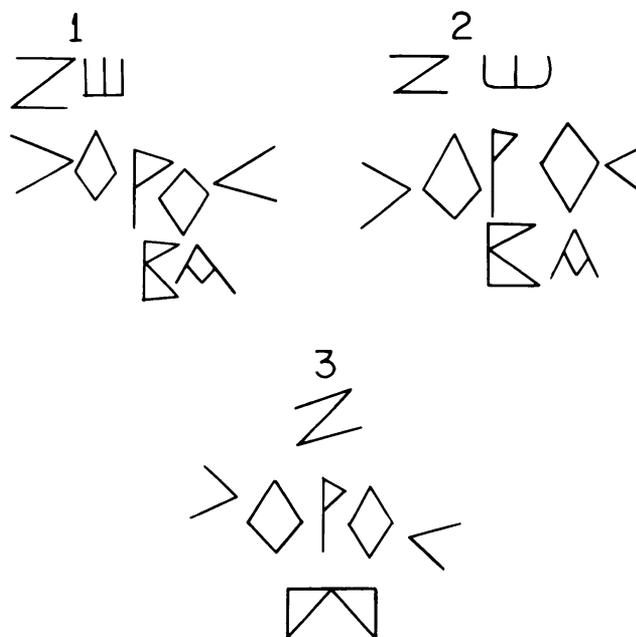


Figure 3. ΖΩ/ΒΑ *Horoi* (scale 1:15)

To determine what territorial entities the three *horoi* separated, we must try to discover what the abbreviated forms ΖΩ and ΒΑ stand for. Since boundary markers may serve to distinguish one person's property from that of another, it would be reasonable to see the Lathou-

<sup>6</sup> Published by J. H. Oliver, *Hesperia* 11 (1942) 58–61 no. 25; B. D. Meritt and J. Traill, *The Athenian Agora XV, Inscriptions: The Athenian Councillors* (Princeton 1974) no. 416.

<sup>7</sup> In restudying *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 4531 S. Dow, *Phoenix* 36 (1982) 316, writes that its diamond-shaped *omicrons* are rare and that this form of the letter does not appear in Larfeld's tables. Larfeld (*supra* n.5) 498 lists four occurrences in Period XVII and includes the shape in his chart of Attic letters (Plate II). A perusal of the Attic *corpus* turns up others: *IG II*<sup>2</sup> 10047, 10683 (not Attic), 11187, 11606a, 12518, a list not intended to be complete.

reza *horoi* in this light. Names beginning Ζω- and Βα- are common in Roman Attica, so the properties of two landowners, a Zopyros or a Zoilos and a Bakchios, for example, could have been the subject of demarcation here. There is, however, good reason for hesitating to accept this solution.

Several kilometers southwest of Lathoureza (*Fig. 3*) a peninsula jutting into the sea forms the cape where the ancients believed the goddess Leto stopped during her wanderings to loosen her girdle (ζωστήρ) in anticipation of the birth of her children. The Athenians acknowledged this stopover by naming the cape Zoster and building a temple to Apollo, Artemis, and Leto at the base of the peninsula. To my mind it is more than just a coincidence that on Lathoureza something to the west of the boundary was labeled Ζω, while nearby to the southwest is the place Ζωστήρ. The place-name should give us a clue to the full form of the abbreviation in the boundary inscriptions. The clue is indirect, for it is difficult to argue a direct link between the Lathoureza *horoi* and the sanctuary of Apollo Zosterios.<sup>8</sup> The sanctuary was active in Roman times,<sup>9</sup> but there is no reason to think that in the second century after Christ it had come to possess any generous portion of land to the north. Throughout its history the sanctuary's holdings were confined to the immediate environs of the cape. But though the *temenos* was never large, the name that it carried need not have always been so narrowly restricted. In this context I should like to use a suggestion made by Eliot to the effect that people dwelling around the cape sometimes referred to themselves as Ζωστήριοι.<sup>10</sup> The suggestion is based on the account in Stephanus of Byzantium *s.v.* Ζωστήρ: ἐνταῦθα θύουσι Ἀλαεῖς Λητοῖ καὶ Ἀρτέμιδι καὶ Ἀπόλλωνι Ζωστήριω. ὁ τοπίτης Ζωστήριος. The entry does not actually support Eliot, for Stephanus' use of τοπίτης instead of his customary τὸ ἐθνικόν indicates that he had not seen the term used of persons. Nevertheless, since both Apollo and Artemis carry the term as a title,<sup>11</sup> its transference to the neighboring coastal inhabitants could have taken place quite naturally. Zoster and the sanctuary of Apollo lay within the territory of the Attic deme Halai Aixonides. By Hadrianic times, as the influence of the Athenian *boule* was on the wane and deme identity not so important as it once was,<sup>12</sup> inhabitants of the deme

<sup>8</sup> In earlier times the god's title was simply Zoster. The epithet Zosterios was normal Roman usage.

<sup>9</sup> K. Kourouniotes, *ArchDelt* 11 (1927/8) 53.

<sup>10</sup> Eliot (*supra* n.2) 25.

<sup>11</sup> For references previous to Stephanus see LSJ *s.v.* Ζωστήριος.

<sup>12</sup> For this decline of the Attic demes, see J. Traill, *The Political Organization of Attica* (*Hesperia* Suppl. 14 [1975]) 96.

may well have taken to calling themselves commonly Zosterioi, just as their brethren at the cape itself had undoubtedly been doing for some time. If this be accepted, then I would suggest that the ΖΩ of the *horoi* on Lathoureza refers to that side of the boundary where land belonging to Zosterioi began.

The other abbreviation of the Lathoureza *horoi*, ΒΑ, labels something to the east and southeast of the hill. We must resist the assumption that the letters stand for Βάρη, the town and plain to which they point, for this name, commonly transliterated as Vari, definitely post-dates antiquity. It is most probably Albanian in origin.<sup>13</sup> Nor is there any deme or other ancient place-name known or suspected of being in the area to which the letters might belong. This impasse could be overcome by taking the ΒΑ- as part of a personal name. Thus on one side of the boundary could lie land of Zosterioi, on the other side the estate of the wealthy landowner Βα. . . . This is possible, but I should like to suggest a different solution.

If on one side of the boundary lay Zosterian land, on the other side the owner should be of at least coequal importance, for both abbreviations are given equal prominence.<sup>14</sup> During the imperial period the one owner who could claim such stature was the emperor. The ΒΑ- could therefore be expanded to reflect this, as βασιλικῆς/οῦ, “royal (land/estate).” The same term, fully written out, occurs in three ambiguous contexts in *IG II<sup>2</sup> 2776*, where it has been interpreted as either “walnut trees” or “imperial lands.”<sup>15</sup> There is no impediment to the latter translation. Beginning with Hadrian it became an increasingly common custom in Greece to refer to the emperor as βασιλεύς. Use of the adjectival form βασιλικός followed naturally.<sup>16</sup> Imperial acreages would be described by this adjective.

In sum, as one possibility for the Lathoureza *horoi* I propose the reading:

Ζω(στηρίων)  
> ὄρο(ς γῆς vel χωρίου) <  
βα(σιλικῆς/οῦ).

<sup>13</sup> Besides the references cited by Eliot (*supra* n.2) 35 n.2, see P. Phourikes, *Athena* 41 (1929) 98f.

<sup>14</sup> This reasoning is based on *IG V.1 1371a*, the closest extant parallel to the Lathoureza *horoi*, one of a series of rupestral boundary markers between Messenia and Laconia, in which the single *mu* on one side of ὄρος is answered by a single *lambda* on the opposite site. The inscription belongs to early imperial times.

<sup>15</sup> For references *cf.* the inscription’s latest editor, S. Miller, *Hesperia* 41 (1972) 86. Miller favors “walnut trees” in his translation (80).

<sup>16</sup> On the two terms *cf.* H. Mason, *Greek Terms for Roman Institutions* (BASP Suppl. 13 [1974]) 120f.

This interpretation does not necessitate the existence of a Roman villa here, something the negative evidence from Vari does not support in any case.<sup>17</sup> It merely assumes that in the reign of Hadrian or one of the Antonines a plot of land in southwest Attica was under imperial ownership.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Roman villas have turned up periodically along the Attic coast south of Athens but not, so far, in the area of Vari: cf. U. Kahrstedt, *Die wirtschaftliche Gesicht Griechenlands in der Kaiserzeit* (Bern 1954) 61.

<sup>18</sup> In the preparation of this article I have been aided by the good advice of K. F. Kitchell and the anonymous referee.